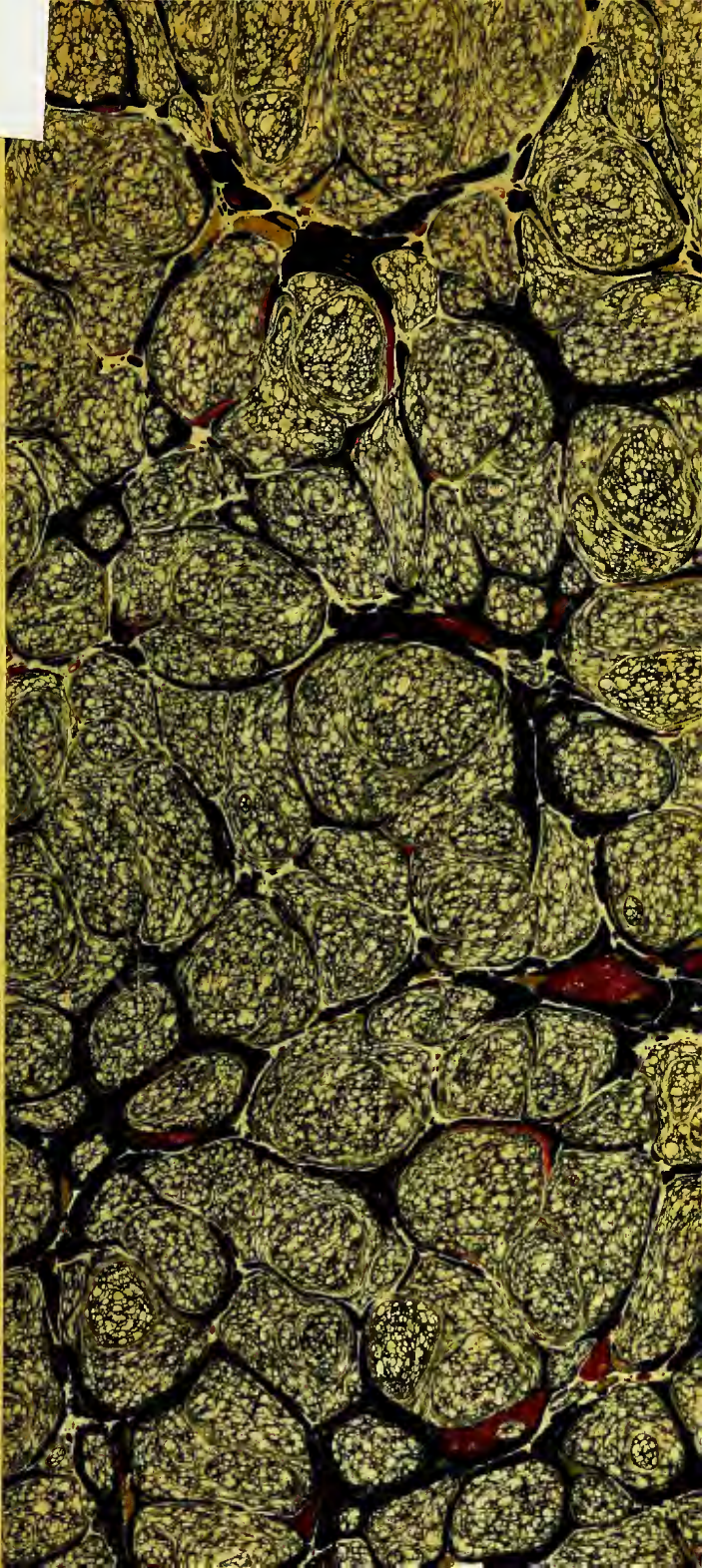


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KNOWING AND ACTING

AN INAUGURAL LECTURE
DELIVERED BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD
26 NOVEMBER 1910

BY

J. A. SMITH

*Waynflete Professor of Moral and
Metaphysical Philosophy*

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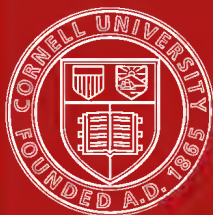
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ERRATA

P. 5, l. 5. *dele comma after* endeavour

P. 19, l. 5 *from foot. dele comma after* human

P. 23, l. 1. *for or read of*

NOTE. *For a development of the doctrine of the independence of practical and theoretical activity the reader is referred to Croce's Filosofia della Pratica (from which a few expressions in the lecture are borrowed.)*

A.25.3110

HENRY FROWDE, M.A.

PUBLISHER TO THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

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TORONTO AND MELBOURNE

KNOWING AND ACTING

It is usually thought to be the first duty of the new holder of a University Chair to recall the memory of his predecessors, and perhaps to attempt some appreciation of their work. But in the present case this is unnecessary. The memory of my predecessors is yet fresh and green in the recollection of the University. I know of some still with us who were present at Dean Mansel's inaugural lecture; I might myself—though to my loss I did not—have attended the lectures of Chandler, and their successor is, most happily, still present and active among us. To an Oxford audience of 1910 no words of mine are required to recall the wit of Mansel or the erudition of Chandler, still less the personality of my immediate predecessor. I am deeply sensible of the honour and the responsibility of succession to such distinguished thinkers and scholars. I ask leave to pass from this topic, and to auspicate my tenure of office by commemorating two among the illustrious and beloved dead who have adorned and enlightened this University, and to whom as teachers, colleagues, and friends, I, like so many others, owe an unrepayable debt. Not that their memory either stands the least in need of revival or reminder, but I would fain seize this opportunity to recall their names in gratitude and piety. Of each I will speak briefly and in words not my own, of my College Tutor, Richard Lewis Nettleship, in the words which his friend wrote for his epitaph in the College Chapel, 'He loved great things and thought

little of himself : desiring neither fame nor influence, he won the devotion of men and was a power in their lives : and, seeking no disciples, he taught to many the greatness of the world and of man's mind ' ; of my great Master, Edward Caird—I can use no words less or other than those which disciples in philosophy have loved to repeat whenever Death has severed personal intercourse with a beloved and revered teacher—*άνήρ, ὡς ἡμεῖς φαίμεν ἄν, τῶν τότε ὧν ἐπειράθημεν ἄριστος καὶ ἄλλως φρονιμώτατος καὶ δικαιοτάτος*—the wisest and best man we have ever known.

The legislator, as the Greeks would have called him, who framed the brief regulations determining the duties of the Waynflete Professor of Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy, describes them in a way which rather sets a problem than furnishes guidance. The Professor, he says, ' shall lecture and give instruction on the principles and history of Mental Philosophy, and on its connexion with Ethics.' He distinguishes two great departments of philosophic thought—so recognizedly distinct as already to be assigned for separate treatment to two other Professors in the University—and he enjoins that they shall be afresh discussed in their connexion with one another, yet with respect for their distinction. It can scarcely be his meaning that his Professor should attempt the invidious task of harmonizing the possibly divergent accounts given of Logic by the Wykeham Professor and of Ethics by Whyte's Professor, of performing in public the higher synthesis of his colleagues' several contributions to philosophic truth, or—less arrogantly—of indicating or reinforcing their latent consonance. Such a task, had it been required or suggested, I could not have

undertaken. I am content to accept his words as an instruction to begin my tenure of office by reflecting upon the relations to one another of certain parts or branches of Philosophy, commonly distinguished, if not separated, from one another; to endeavour, after clearness and distinctness of view about the precise nature of their difference and connexion, to bear all this perpetually in mind, and, if possible, to assist others to the rejection of whatever is fanciful or arbitrary and the firmer grasp of whatever is solid and reasonable. In this task not much aid is vouchsafed by the legislator himself who, like the lord of the oracle at Delphi, *οὔτε λέγει οὔτε κρύπτει ἀλλὰ σημαίνει*. In fact, as I have said, he has left to his Professor rather a problem to consider than a clear solution to his natural questioning. It is to this problem I invite your attention to-day. It is one which frequently recurs in the history of Philosophy, and it still remains of interest and importance.

To divide or partition anything presupposes that it is a whole, a whole of parts. Philosophy is above all things a whole, a whole in the most pregnant sense of the word—not an aggregate or a collection, but a well-ordered system. This it is at least in idea or as an ideal. Though historically it has been constituted by the gathering together of a number of separate and separately originated problems, discussions, solutions, it is not, and cannot regard itself as a mere sum or aggregate of these. It exists precisely to remove their initial separateness, and, so far as it is actual, is the result of their integration. It looks behind and beyond their severance, and ceaselessly labours, not to abolish or obliterate their distinctions, but to link them together, to organize them, or rather to discover and exhibit their organic connexion within its well-ordered

structure. Its aim is to articulate the whole of thought or knowledge, and at the same time to reduce to order the rich variety of the whole Real which is its only adequate and commensurate object, nay more, to discover, apprehend, and make patent, first to itself and then to the common mind of humanity, the harmonious structure of that supreme, whole, and single Reality which embraces both itself and its object : to do this at least in its main outlines and dominating principles.

This unifying activity is the primary and most obvious characteristic of Philosophy. The desire to find and realize unity is the primordial source of its being ; the confident belief in its reality is the support of its continuance in existence. Of course it is not content merely to reiterate that all is one : it endeavours to show how things are one, what sort of one they are. Still, it is for unity that it seeks ; unity is its characteristic note. Now, at first sight, the nature of that which it takes for its province seems such as precisely to threaten defeat to its desire and refutation to its belief. Reality—actual Reality—as it encounters our gaze without and within us, presents an endlessly variegated spectacle ; it is inexhaustibly fertile in the production and manifestation of differences, and appears to exist in and by ceaseless self-diremption and self-differentiation. Nature and Mind alike run riot into endless detail. Differences perpetually and everywhere break out. The mind seems to have no office but to note and register the differences thus thrust upon its observation, and in the endeavour to keep pace with this multiplication in its object is driven to depart from its own primitive simplicity, specializing itself into faculties, sub-faculties, and so on without limit. The hope of discovering or rediscovering

unity without or within is a dream of an impossible return to a past simplicity which perhaps never was present. Whether in this Wirr-warr of beings, happenings, relations, &c., there is any unity, any plan or system, that, so we are told, we cannot ever know—*ignoramus et ignorabimus*. The outlook for Philosophy seems desperate enough.

Such doubts, it will perhaps be replied, are extravagant and metaphysical: can they not be met with a *solvitur ambulando*? Are not many, perhaps most, of the differences which meet us so slight as to be negligible? And between differentials do we not also find threads of connexion? Can we not in fact, and with a correctness guaranteed by success in attaining our aims, group and range together elements in our experience? Undoubtedly we can and do proceed by such abstraction and simplification of the given, and we find our account in it. The facts supplied to us are patient of such treatment, and so treated answer to some at least of our demands upon them, though at times, and in serious, perhaps the most serious, cases, they recalcitrate and prove unpredictably and disconcertingly treacherous. It is no mere paradox that nothing happens but the unexpected. We must in all honesty admit that we have no right to confidence in any event, that our abstractions and neglects are arbitrary, our groupings and generalizations provisional, and our successes and failures alike no better than matters of inscrutable luck.

Granted that this is true of the rude results of practical common sense, does not the existence of the sciences give us a better-grounded hope? No; the sciences but carry further with greater conscientiousness and more discretion in statement the precarious methods of procedure begun in practical common sense. They profit in reputation by reckoning

to their credit the coming off of their hazarded predictions, which they can show no title to regard as due to anything else than the same luck. The track of the history of the sciences is strewn with the wreckage of outworn systematizations, falsified predictions, and discarded *anticipationes naturae*. It is idle to urge that they *have* been discarded, and by the sciences themselves. The sciences must be judged by their whole past performance and their present profession. What they profess is to know in advance, to inform with respect to the future. In this they profess to exclude luck, and yet they must avow themselves engaged in a gamble with unknown antagonists who are not bound to any as yet securely discovered rules of the game. The course of Nature is a series of surprises : its pretended uniformity is a libel.

Whatever comfort the lover of unity may derive from considering the practical successes of common sense or the sciences, such considerations are not sufficient to justify the high philosophic demand for assured unity and system in and throughout all differences. And yet we need not despair : we must beware of first impressions. For the philosopher—the lover of, and believer in, unity—is not surprised by differences ; he expects them : he is quite ready to acknowledge them, and has no desire to ignore or belittle them. What he believes in is not mere or blank unity, or unity alongside of differences, or even unity permitting them, but systematic or organic unity which *requires* differences within its ordered and harmonious structure. Such is the unity he expects, and indeed knows, Reality to be. It is therefore no shock to him to find it fertile in the manifestation of differences, or even to find the appearance of multiplicity at first masking its inner unity and orderliness. Only he will

not consent to have them forced upon him : he knows that they cannot be so forced, or impose themselves at all without his consent and approval. They must legitimate their claim to be received. In their first appearance he even welcomes them as stimulus and material for his special activity. The spectacle presented by Reality to our first, i.e. our most unthinking view, is so far from discouraging to him that he recognizes it as the necessary occasion of his peculiar work,

All this is, I am well aware, rather a confession of faith than a reasoned argument. The proof of it cannot be given now, but can be produced only in and by its development.

To unify—if that be possible—what we call ‘ Nature ’ is not commonly acknowledged to be the business of the philosopher, nor is he generally thought to possess any competence for that task. His proper—or at least his primary—business is thought to be that of setting his own house in order. He is bidden to restrict his ordering function to the inner world—the world of Mind or Spirit. *Tecum habita ut noris quam sit tibi curta supellex.* If he accepts this limitation, there is evident a rather gleeful insistence on the difficulties of his accepted task. Here, too, is the same spectacle of endless detail and difference. Even after Psychology, as the science of the inner world, continuing the work begun by practical common sense, has reduced to classes and brought under laws the immense variety of mental phenomena, the result of its arbitrary abstractions and artificial simplifications—themselves without producible justification—is still so complex and so disintegrated as to present little hope to the would-be assertor or discoverer of a single well-ordered system of harmonious and self-explanatory unity. It may here be remarked that the philosopher does not expect or assert

such unity in what we call the individual mind, or at best only a forecast and analogue of such unity. Yet *qua* philosopher he is confident that in all the variety of mental life there is a unity, giving being and intelligibility to all the differences that genuinely exist and therefore must be acknowledged. But the differents must *be* different—really and genuinely different, and not merely *seem* so, nor is there any obligation to accept in regard to them the first deliverances of this or that casual observer.

But how, it may be asked, are we to get at this unity? How especially are we to be sure that what we arrive at is not simply the empirical self of you or me, already discredited as a mere pretender to be the unity of which we are in search? The answer is, by Reflexion. This is a mere word, but I believe it to stand for a genuine idea. Here I can only say what it is not: it is not observation or 'introspection' or any operation known to or practised by the sciences. It is the special method, or rather act, of Philosophy. In performing it the mind ceases to be this or that mind, it becomes and finds itself as Mind universal: it discovers not *my* mind, or mind 'in general', not a mutilated individual, nor 'an arbitrary complex of mutilated individuals', but Mind Individual and Universal, single and integrate, that of which your mind and mine are isolated and distracted fragments, yet at the same time parts and tributaries, and as such participants in its nature and similar to it in structure.

That Reality, as well within us as without, should present differences is to the philosopher matter neither for surprise nor for regret. He is not dismayed by the extent and variety of these differences, or by the fact that the very differences themselves differ *inter se*, in amount, degree, kind, &c. There are differents and differences, and not

only different, but differences differ from one another. This he acknowledges, and indeed insists upon, and nowhere more than 'in his own house'. But he must equally, or more, insist upon the difference between real and unreal, genuine and spurious differences. The doctrine of degrees of reality here or elsewhere is not a popular one—precisely because it is a philosophical one. And indeed even within philosophy it is itself inadequate. At any rate here we are on the look out for differences in reality which are more than of degree, which sunder their different by a gap which no interpolation of graded *media* can fill, which justify the contrast of the severed terms as respectively real and unreal, and finally expose the hollowness of a fancied unity of nature unevenly divided between the contrasted terms.

Philosophy can admit no differences which cannot approve themselves real and genuine, whereas in practical common sense, and even in the sciences, only spurious differences are admitted or both are confounded together. The fact of difference thus, with a proviso, to the full admitted, a few words may be said as to the nature and implications of this fact, care being taken to supply no more than can be easily assimilated even by common sense and science. Perhaps in the discussion of them some grounds will emerge, some reasons insinuate themselves, for the philosophic faith that only such differences are real and genuine which can vindicate for themselves an intelligible place within an ordered and harmonious unity, or at least that those which fail to do so lie under grave suspicion of unreality and imposture.

Paradoxical as it may sound, it is universally true that every difference implies and presupposes as its basis a unity within which lie the terms it holds apart. This holds even of what is called mere or bare difference,

for no two terms can differ unless they both *are*, i. e. fall within the same universe. Further, each difference implies a basis of its own, and each sort of difference a special sort of basis. So intimate is the connexion between the difference of two terms and their unity, that it may be said that they differ precisely in respect of what they are or have in common, and vice versa. Thus red and blue differ as colours, i.e. in respect of, and in condition of, their being both colours, and the notes of a scale or a melody differ just because they are related to and within the self-same whole. This coexistence within the same area enters into the nature of each: to differ is only possible upon a basis of agreement; to be different, two terms must have not only something in common, but precisely that in respect of which they differ. Nor is it possible to assert—except verbally—their difference without recognizing their ‘identity’.

The deeper their difference (if we may speak of depth, in distinction from width, of difference), i. e. the more profoundly the difference enters into their several natures, the more intimate is the bond of union between them and the more penetratingly is the nature of each coloured by the fact of their joint membership of the whole, and vice versa. How far-reaching is the difference between two lovers of one mistress! And it is so because they are so thoroughly at one. Philosophers have made themselves a byword by the dissidence of their dissent, and yet where can we find as among them so extensive a mutual understanding? Differences can only exist—or at any rate can only live and thrive—on a basis of identity, as identity can only live and thrive on differences. *ἐκ τῶν διαφερόντων καλλίστη ἁρμονία*. What alone is real is the system which permits and requires both. Therefore it is that

the philosopher is the friend and welcomer of differences, the insister on their value and seriousness. But as before, he will not accept as real and genuine all differences, nor all at the same value. Some he will roundly denounce as spurious. To deserve and win his recognition a difference must vindicate its claim, must legitimate itself by disclosing its basis and its implication with the unity which together with it forms its terms into a system. Trivial, insignificant arbitrary differences imply and are implied by trivial, insignificant arbitrary unifications. Where system is not exhibited, difference and unity are alike unsound—neither can be called genuine or real. And in particular the differences drawn and used by practical common sense, or even by the sciences, deserve just as much, and just as little, respect as the hurriedly formed aggregations and collocations, proudly termed ‘classes’ and ‘laws’, with which they are inseparably connected.

All this applies to the crude though sometimes elaborate, attempts made to enumerate and classify kinds of difference, or to arrange them in a scale or hierarchy. Not that the aim and design of these attempts is erroneous: it is the execution that is at fault. Nothing could be more foolish in the philosopher than a prejudice against recognizing differences of differences, but these too he cannot take as they are offered to him, or at the current value which they bear in ordinary life or in scientific treatises. That they ‘work’ there is indeed significant to him and sets him a problem, but it does not guarantee the value assumed for or ascribed to them. He must assay them by his own tests, and so tried some of them prove base metal enough, mere tokens and counters in the hazardous operations of the common mart where the ordinary

practical man and his better-informed scientific neighbour ply their useful business. There are floating in the world of thought far too much flash currency, far too many worthless securities, driving by a new 'Gresham's law' sound money from the market.

From time to time an uneasy sense of insecurity visits the usually absorbed and busy traffickers: they are threatened with a necessity to 'realize', and they turn reproachfully to the despised philosopher with requests to restore their shaken confidence and to correct their currency—their *tesserae notionum*. They find their working coinage so defaced or degraded that they fear that for all their well-filled coffers they may on examination prove bankrupt, their fancied wealth turned in a moment, like the fairies' gifts, to withered leaves. They dread lest their working distinctions and unifications prove to be without fixity and security of basis.

De nobis fabula narratur. We are all in the same case. Even the philosopher cannot convert all his possessions into pure gold. Even if he could he might, like Mark Twain's hero with the million pound banknote in his pocket, starve in the midst of plenty. He must, like others, for the larger part of his thought and practice, rely on common sense and such aid as the sciences afford. Philosophy is not a substitute for either. After all, it pretends to do no more than to explicate and articulate the main structural principles of experience.

This is all it professes and hopes to do even in regard to 'its own house'—the world of Mind or Spirit. This is its first business: with this business we are here to attempt a beginning. The domestic distinction we are here to consider and criticize is that between Metaphysical or Moral Philosophy. The common basis is patent, for

whatever the difference be between them, each is and is named Philosophy. The distinction is not very well expressed, for there is clearly no proper antithesis between 'moral' and 'metaphysical'—'metaphysical' being an epithet of Philosophy in the largest sense of the word, in which it includes moral philosophy and whatever in philosophy is contrasted with it. 'Mental Philosophy' is worse. By the one and the other term I shall take leave to consider meant what at least at Oxford is usually called Logic. What are meant to be contrasted are two parts or departments of Philosophy. The distinction between them presupposes a more fundamental one, which may be most simply expressed as that between doing and knowing, the act or deed and the thought; or, as simply but more concretely, between the agent or doer and the thinker or knower, the man of action and the man of thought.

Here again the basis of the difference—the field or area of it—is clear: it is Life, the life of the spirit or mind. Both differentials fall within Life, and each is a kind of living.

Concerning this difference—the difference between doing and knowing—we are now to ask whether it is genuine and real, whether they are so related to one another and to the unity within which they fall that a system is constituted, a system which, in virtue of its own nature and by an inherent necessity, articulates itself thus and not otherwise, and constrains us to think it thus and no otherwise divided, so that in thinking it thus we know it. On no other condition can we admit the offered difference to be genuine and real. My contention is that it is so, and that all other divisions are spurious, or at best secondary subdivisions of one or other. Only so

is it possible to grasp the several nature of the opposed terms and the manner of their interrelation.

Now at first sight nothing seems plainer than the existence and mode of this difference, and yet from the beginning doubts suggest themselves. The two terms are not as ordinarily conceived, sharply defined, or clearly contrasted. Action is not simply ignorance, knowing is not simply inaction or passivity ; the terms are not mere opposites. And there appear to be other contrasting terms to each than the other, e.g. making and (in another way) feeling. But making is either a blurred conception, which includes certain forms of doing and certain forms of knowing (for we 'make' advances in knowledge as well as chairs and tables), or a subdivision of doing, and feeling is a term with a meaning as vague and shifting as the fact of feeling itself. For reasons which I cannot here develop, I disallow the claim of feeling to stand on a level with doing and knowing : the real or supposed existence of a department of Philosophy called Aesthetics need not cause us to hesitate.

Doing and knowing present themselves as so related within a closed area—which is human nature or life—that whatever there is not the one is the other, and vice versa. Each is a mode of human—or more generally spiritual—being or living. That is their identity, but it is their difference which first strikes us and puts their identity out of remembrance. It will be observed that both terms must be taken very widely—doing as including wishing, willing, intending, &c., and knowing as including sensation, perception, judgment, reasoning, insight, &c. So taken they appear to differ as much at least as Odd and Even in Number, or Straight and Curved in Line. Our aim is, if possible, to *understand* their difference,

Let us—if we can—forget that they are never found except coupled within the unity of a single spirit or spiritual experience : let us look merely at their difference as it is ‘thrust’ upon us in direct experience and ingenuous observation. What contrast can be greater or more unmistakable than that between the statesman or the man of business, and the philosopher or the poet ! Between the genius of Napoleon and that of Kant ! Between the conduct of a campaign and the discovery of a theory of heat ! Between the reform of the Poor Law and the formation of the Darwinian theory ! From some points of view human beings seem sundered into two disparate types, each of which views the other as its rival and antagonist, regards it with contempt, dislike, mistrust, fear or envy, and all the feelings that divide man from man. The great men of action and the great men of thought appear alienated from one another, the links of mutual understanding, sympathy, and co-operation severed between them, each living in a world of his own inaccessible and impenetrable to the other. And we ourselves—the little ones—find ourselves similarly, if more feebly, divided from one another, and each looking within beholds himself as the mere battlefield of two opposites, oscillating between two incompatible forms of living, alternately pursuing two irreconcilable aims, the improvement of ourselves or our estate and the satisfaction of our curiosity. What folly to speak of our common humanity, of the unity of the self ! They are but the name of unrealizable dreams, of plain impossibilities.

Science confirms the impression, and endorses the deliverance of common sense. Psychology in particular analyses, divides, dissects our supposed unity into disparate faculties : doubtful as to much in its analysis,

it is sure of the difference between our 'active' and our 'passive' powers, our doing and our knowing. This is no special doctrine of the so-called 'Faculty-Psychology', but the common property of all Psychology. It is acknowledged indeed that somehow these different *are* one, but of the *how* no account is vouchsafed. The dogmas of the unity and the diversity of the self are simply left standing side by side in the psychological *Quicunque vult*. They are to be taken as brute facts thrust upon an intelligence which has no office but to take note of them. Man is man, both active and cognitive, human nature is both one and two (or more), as if 'both-and' were words of any meaning or the statement that employs them of any genuine significance. Psychology but continues the work of common sense, and often does little more than add a pseudo-scientific authority to its naïve deliverances and prejudices. Here it is content for the most part to *magnify* the difference, and thereby to render the philosophic problem no clearer but only more urgent.

Neither common sense nor Psychology takes its distinctions with sufficient seriousness. Can either produce a clear, precise, steady definition of doing or of knowing, 'conceptions' with which they constantly and unreflectingly 'work'? The meanings of the one and the other perpetually run together, cross and change places, admit into their circle members from the other, and are constrained to interpolate between their private domains endlessly continuous links of hybrid nature. The types of the man of action and the man of thought flicker and melt into one another. The statesman, to be a statesman, must think and know, the philosopher in his most abstract speculations is surely not doing nothing at all (or why

such dread of his 'destructiveness'?). Can the Poor Law be reformed unknowingly or a theory of heat be devised inactively? Has any psychologist observed an instance of pure knowing or of mere action? Can he honestly claim that his classifications and divisions indubitably carve Reality—psychic reality—'at the joints'?

But to abandon our 'working' distinctions, is that not to return to chaos? Not so: that is not the only alternative. What is clear is that the mind cannot rest in the mere assertion, side by side, of unity and duality or multiplicity. Nor is it fair to charge even common sense, still less Psychology, with complete silence as to the positive relation of knowing and doing to and within the obscure and depreciated unity of the mind or spirit. Suggestions are offered—hints thrown out—for an advance from an untenable position, and these contributions to philosophic insight deserve respectful consideration. Perhaps in critically reviewing them we shall find ourselves collecting the fragments of the integral truth.

The first suggestion is that the difference is not one of mere opposition even within its own sphere: it is not one of kind or nature: positively it is one of degree or amount, yet so wide, so large in amount, as to present a well-grounded *appearance* of difference of kind. And so, while the *real* distinction between acting and knowing is one of degree or amount of something common (or of different proportions of the same 'ingredients'), we are for practical, and indeed for scientific purposes, justified in regarding each as a species of a single genus, e. g. human, living, spiritual being, 'psychic fact or occurrence,' &c. This suggestion in effect and intention denies the genuineness of difference of kind between them, and asserts as the truth underlying it difference of degree. But what is that

single something of which the one is just more and the other less? Are we more alive, or more spiritual, when we know or when we act? Is there any sense in such comparisons? In asking such questions we proceed on a false assumption, and we entangle ourselves further in misconception. We generate misleading expectations: we try to find in each of our two powers what not it, but the other, can furnish; we look for truth in action and for good—practical good—in knowing, and in both cases in vain, for the good of knowing *is* Truth, and the truth of acting *is* Goodness. The source of our error here is the ‘scientific’ prejudice that either differences of kind exist genuinely nowhere, or that if they do they are unintelligible. We may be grateful for the implied doctrine that no difference is genuine except one which is intelligible. But the prejudice *is* a prejudice, and to rest in it is to evade our issue. Everywhere science tries to *substitute* the one sort of difference for the other, and forgets that, while they may go together, the one is not the other, and that concurrence is not identity. The qualitative difference between red and blue *is* not the quantitative difference between two wave lengths, and the difference between doing and knowing *is* not one of degree of truthfulness or practical goodness or of spirituality, &c.—at least, not merely and not genuinely that.

Another suggestion is one more often implied than expressed, used than declared. It is that the relation is one of analogy. It may seem odd to speak of the relation between two analogues as a special sort of *difference*, yet surely if two things are truly described as analogous they must be different, and different in a special way. Kant even defines Analogy as ‘an exact similarity of two relations between quite dissimilar things’. Analogy presupposes

a profound difference between the analogues: the exactest similarity between A and B requires that A and B should be different individuals. Likeness is often presented to us as the *truth* underlying what we hastily take to be identity of kind, and the correlative unlikeness which together with it constitutes the relation of analogy as the truth underlying difference of kind.

Is the relation between acting and knowing one of analogy? Certainly the points of resemblance which exist between the man of action and the man of thought, the doer and the thinker, the deed and the thought, are numerous and striking. We come not easily to an end of them. Nor do they lie merely on the surface: they constitute a profound homology of structure. On this rests the possibility of their conjunction and co-operation. That is what, when we recognize it, makes us call them both psychic or spiritual, or even rational. Yet there remains their difference, and just that difference which is required by their character as analogues of one another. This difference in the general case of analogy we express by calling it a difference of the sphere of application as opposed to the sameness of the principle, a difference of the medium as opposed to the identity of the function, or most simply as a difference of the matter or materials as opposed to the homology of the plan, structure, or form. Can we apply this to the case before us? What are the materials, the substance, out of which acting and knowing are severally but similarly built up? The only answer can be, out of acts and thoughts (knowledges) of a more elementary kind: descend in analysis below these, and again you find the same. The difference between them is endless or ultimate. Even in their most inchoate forms the one preserves its difference from the other.

Nevertheless our last word is not simply that they *are* different : we know not only *that* they come together, but *how* they do so. They are 'as far apart as the poles', and yet again the poles are held fast together within the sphere of human nature or experience, and by their diametrical opposition measure its dimension. Or, as we may put it, human nature or life and every item of it polarizes itself, like the divided fragments of a magnet, into just these opposites : every moment of experience unites them both, and requires within it their diametrical contrast.

The unity, or rather the system, of spiritual being is no fortuitous aggregate of parts anyhow different : by its very nature it permits and requires precisely this polar opposition of knowing and acting, and each fragment of its life and being presents the self-same structure. If we think of this unity as maintaining itself in and through succession, then the cyclical alternation of knowing and acting is the fundamental law of its rhythm—the *Leitmotiv* of the music of the Universe, or at least, of our life. Each and every action presupposes knowledge of a situation : each different action knowledge of a different situation : in and from ignorance no action can arise. And, on the other hand, knowing presupposes acting : in order to know there must first be something to know, and for this to be it must have been enacted. If in the universe the well-springs of action ran dry there would be no 'object' of knowledge, and all knowing—which is essentially *after-thought*—would vanish with the surcease of its object.

This thesis I maintain to be true, true precisely, universally, and without reservation. But if true, is it not a truism, empty, tautologous, uninformative ? I venture to think it is not so.

For, in the first place, it makes an end of the claims of

any third pretender to stand within the life or spirit on an equal footing with those two : it condemns as unphilosophical, i.e. false, all trichotomies of spiritual unity, and all subdivisions of it which do not fall within this primordial division.

In the second place, it excludes as untrue all supposed hybrids or confusions of those two : such are mere illusions and unrealities.

In the third place, it forbids the reduction of either to the other, or of the whole which is the unity of both, to one only. It is equally opposed to 'Intellectualism' and to whatever is its diametrical opponent ('Voluntarism').

Lastly, it sets aside the whole controversy concerning the relative value of the Intellect and the Will. It pronounces for the autonomy of the one and the other.

All the controversies which we thus set aside arise only when we lose hold upon our vision of this their unity or duality which is life and being, and especially our life and being. From the clear upper ether of Philosophy we return to the misty twilight of the cave, where all contours lose their sharpness of outline and all shapes dislimn and melt into one another, to the region of hasty generalizations, careless abstractions, working compromises. Here we may indeed put such questions as that concerning the primacy of the Will over the Intellect or of the Intellect over the Will, the superiority of Goodness to Truth or of Truth to Goodness, or ask whether Action be for the sake of Knowledge, or Knowledge for the sake of Action ; but no conclusive or satisfactory answer can be found. Merely to word our vision in language appropriate to this region is to do it injustice and expose it to misrepresentation, yet at such risk the answer to the last question may be thus formulated : Knowledge is for

the sake of Action, and Action no less for the sake of Knowledge.

Each half of this statement, separately taken, is false: only both together are true. From time to time a falsifying emphasis is thrown on the one, and then in the interests of the truth it becomes necessary to reassert the other. In our time it seems as if it was the latter half that called for restatement and defence. Time was when the opposite was the case, when it was not doubted that Contemplation—the Beatific *Vision*—was the end of all action, the goal and reward of all our striving; the more striking and potent forms of mere action were contemned and depreciated, their endlessness and futility the favourite theme of Philosophy. ('Doing is a deadly thing, Doing ends in death'.) Now it is otherwise: our efforts after knowledge are decried as the vain attempts to satisfy an idle and insatiable curiosity, our desires for it derided by a strenuous agnosticism, hungry after the fruits of action, incurious of light. The lovers of knowledge are put on the defensive. It may sadly be acknowledged that some of its foes are of its own household; it is wounded in the house of its friends. Even at a University—even at this University—it has to be vindicated against domestic antagonists.

Reminding you that the truth lies only in the combination of the two halves—in the statement that Action is just as much (or as little) for the sake of Knowledge as Knowledge is for the sake of Action, I make here some plea for the less popular half. Let us recall that in the systole and diastole of being action necessarily produces new matter for knowledge, the world of the known or knowable is thus extended, and that no otherwise can this occur. Before knowledge steps upon the scene, something must

have been enacted: history must be made before it is noted, recorded, and studied: enlightened by the historian's labours the statesman sets to work and makes fresh history for the historian once more to note, record, and study. Knowledge thus supervenes upon action: all knowledge is of the past, the fact, the enacted. Action is the *sine qua non* of knowledge.

But does action produce knowledge as its chief result or as a bye-product? If my answer is the latter, I may be thought to have abandoned my client's case, but really it is not so. For what I contend is that action is for the sake of knowledge in the same sense in which knowledge is for the sake of acting. Now knowing (and, further back, thinking) is primarily for the sake of Knowledge or Truth and only secondarily and incidentally for the sake of Goodness. In both cases we are to ignore the true doctrine that each is primarily for its own sake: in both cases we are to have no regard except to subordinate ends. Still less are we to admit that the true end of either lies in the undivided unity of Life within which they co-operate. The vocabulary of 'means' and 'ends' will not suffer us to raise the only proper question or give the only true answer. Our question is: is it true or not that in the same sense as all thinking and knowing is aimed at, and actually subserves more effective action, so all willing and acting is aimed at, and subserves more successful knowing? My answer is, that it *is* true.

For, if not, what *is* acting aimed at, what is it the means to? To reply 'Action itself' is merely to emphasize its autonomy and we must assert the same of knowledge: to reply 'Life' is again to say of it what can equally be said of knowledge, it is to deny it any *special* end or aim. The only alternative to Knowledge is Pleasure—an

answer whose falsity I need not stay to expose. It seems as if judgment must pass for Knowledge through non-appearance of a possible rival. But the case for it may be put more positively. Why do we act or will? Not in order to act or to live: such answers, however true, are at our present level of thought meaningless. Is it so great a paradox to reply: we act always in order to see what will come of it, to see what the result will be, to see how things and ourselves will comport themselves, how they will respond to our call upon them and show us what they and we are? At least the experimenting man of science will not lightly reject our account of his motives, and we shall have deprived the complacent practical man of his most useful ally. But even the practical man may be challenged to say whether he expects (excluding pleasure) any other fruit and reward of his action than knowledge of himself, others and the world. Does he desire aught else than to see the work of his hands, to behold his business flourish or his enemy prostrate in the dust? But is this 'seeing' knowledge? Most assuredly it is, and it is the end of the doing, the only element in the total result which is not the doing itself, the only thing there to which the doing can be called a means.

A full vindication of this view is not here attempted, Here what is suggested is the principle in the light of whose truth the whole controversy 'pales its ineffectual fires'. The principle is that our nature is the free alliance of two sovereign powers, and our life the history of their co-operation without derogation of their several autonomy. Each sovereign power has its ministers and subordinates: the Will realizes itself through volitions, passions, desires, appetites, &c., the Intellect realizes itself through the

forms and functions of thinking, reasonings, judgments, definitions, descriptions, observations, &c. In Life there are no ends which are not also beginnings, no aims which are not also *points de mire*, in a word action never attains but it presents matter for knowledge; knowledge takes cognizance of its achievement and prescribes to it a further effort. Hence in stating their relation we must not use of either in relation to the other the vocabulary of 'means' and 'end': that language is appropriate only when by 'end' we mean a bye-end, and by 'means' something merely useful. With such restriction it is equally true to say that acting subserves thinking and that thinking subserves acting: each supplies to the other the occasion of that other's free exercise and independent development—its stimulus but not its life.

Freeing ourselves from the distorting influence of the terms 'means' and 'ends' we may state their relation thus: action is for the sake of action and knowledge for the sake of knowledge, but each incidentally, or concomitantly, is the condition of the other. Action cannot be except where knowledge precedes, and knowledge can take cognizance only of what has been enacted, i.e. of the results of action informed by knowledge. This doctrine is a paradox to common sense and to science, but not to philosophy. For in philosophy we learn that that only is knowable which is real and that that only can be called real which is the result of a *spiritual* activity—which has been realized in the light of knowledge. All genuine knowledge is historical—is knowledge of history, and history is as a whole and in every part of it the achievement of will—not of this or that individual will of this or that individual knower, but in and through their wills of that universal Will which endlessly fulfils its good

pleasure, as in their knowing the universal Mind which is allied with it endlessly reviews its achievements, uniting its vision and its volition in the whole and single Life which is Reality. The life of the individual—be it man or brute—is a portion or fragment of this life mutilated and marred by its isolation and contraction within a narrow circle. Yet even there it repeats the rhythm and structure of the whole in whose life is its life, momentarily, and transiently, with many a failure and many a fitful compromise synthesizing the two powers which make up its being—its action and its knowledge, and so actualizing itself as a member of the actual universe. So conceiving the universe we understand the relation to one another within the narrower universe of human life, of action and knowledge as each conditioning the other. Yet there the relation must remain partly unintelligible to us because in fact there they never come to unity with one another, but perpetually fall apart in unnatural and disabling severance, the one degrading into empty aspirations, vain desires, tumultuous passions, futile strivings, and the other into idle and barren speculations or self-deluding anticipations of a future which can never be known until by action it has been made present. Only in the elect of mankind and in them rarely do we see—or seem to see—the reconciliation and co-operation of the powers duly actualized. For most men at all times—and for all at most times—the best that can be hoped for is a reasonable compromise. Of the very greatest at their supreme moments can it alone be said, ‘they willed what they did, and they did what they willed,’ i.e. they acted on knowledge of the situation and saw what by their action they had accomplished.

If this then be the true account of the nature of man

and the relation within it of his cognitive and active powers, it follows that the discussion of the one must be clearly severed for a discussion of the other, and yet that there is room and need for a subsequent discussion of their interconnexion. But here and now I may be permitted to make an application of the doctrine at once more general and more particular and practical.

Here at the University, we who are teachers profess ourselves specially characterized by a determinate idiosyncrasy or temperament which prescribes our station and duty in the State. We are born with a special interest in truth or knowledge, with a peculiar love for it: that is what unites us here while it differentiates us from other servants of the State with different endowments and different vocations, which makes a special sympathy, mutual understanding and co-operation possible and actual among us. Not meticulously anxious to vindicate for the truth we discover and endeavour to communicate to our younger countrymen a narrow 'practical' value; we still do not seek or communicate it solely 'for its own sake'; we recognize that its value belongs to it in its union with action, as on the other hand action has no value save in union with it. Nor are we intolerant of those whose immediate business is neither to advance nor to propagate knowledge; we know that without their aid our occupation would be idle, our whole life empty and fruitless. It is our business to keep the brain of the State awake.

But we have here also a narrower or more special function. Our work is not merely to advance knowledge, but to advance it beyond ourselves—to inspire others with the love of truth and to enlist others in the common task, and to do this under limiting conditions prescribed by Nature, the circumstances of our time and place, and the wills of others

than ourselves. We have to remember that our pupils here are twentieth-century Englishmen, mostly belonging to a particular class in the community, almost all with a special and somewhat peculiar previous education, at a period of life with distinct and well-marked characteristics, just emerged from a stage in which they have been rightly engrossed in practice and what is called the formation of character, but one also in which the need of larger knowledge has not made itself poignantly felt and their intelligence not been spurred to any very serious effort. They easily believe, and are indeed sometimes encouraged to believe, that for life not much more knowledge, except of a technical character, is required. Of what is offered to them here, they cannot at first, if even in the end, see the use. Their love of truth, their belief in its vital value, their desire for it, are variable, fugitive, uncertain, and only too many sophistic voices din in their ears lessons which give a good conscience to their natural scepticism and supply apologies for mental inertia.

On the other hand, we find in them often a quick and ardent, if as yet undirected and indiscriminate curiosity which is as it were the first form of the love of truth, and a generous trust in their teachers which is an incipient faith in the value of that which they have to teach. The first is too often chilled, the latter too often disillusioned, both by our fault. The root of our fault lies not so much in lack of sympathy and slackness of will as in ignorance. We do not know, because we do not sufficiently study, the changes in the situation created by our abilities and endowments on the one hand, and on the other by the capacities, needs and desires of our pupils, and of our fellow citizens generally. At no time more than now has the need for reconsideration of this been so urgent, because

it has long been neglected, and there are signs that if we do not awake to it our complacent content will be rudely broken. But we are awakening to it, are indeed awake to it.

Let us temperately and without arrogance or self-applause remind ourselves and others of this, that for some of our fellow countrymen and at a certain stage of their lives the encouragement and development of the love of truth is the *unum necessarium*. Nothing else—no other passion however ardent—can take its place, no love of country, no devotion to cause or person. ‘For he that loves it not, will not take much pains to get it, nor be much concerned when he misses it.’ Knowledge is a primary necessity of all right acting and successful living. There cannot be too much of it, and there should be no limits to its pursuit and distribution. And of this treasure we here at the Universities are, by vocation and profession, the principal custodians. We strive to add to it, we keep it and impart it. *Vitai lampada tradimus*. With this function we may well be content, and acknowledging ourselves thinkers neither magnify nor extenuate the complementary functions of our more active fellows. They and we are members one of another, and within human life there is ample room for diversity of gifts and diversity of office. It is theirs to render our thinking and teaching efficacious in practice, ours to supply the knowledge without which their activity might be no more than a busy mischievousness. Neither can claim superiority over the other, and for our part we have the well grounded assurance that what we endeavour to supply is indispensably necessary to the welfare of all. ‘Where there is no *vision*, the people perisheth.’

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